

“Investing in the Harvest ”

- Galatians 6 -

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Galatians 6 - *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one examine his own*

work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For each one shall bear his own load. 6 Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. 11 See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! 12 As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13 For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. 14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. 16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. 17 From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. 18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.



Chapter 6

6:1

Faithful to the end of this letter, Paul continues with his exhortation on grace. Not the heady esoteric coffee-talk grace, but the real ‘rubber-meets-the-road’ stuff. The practical. Grace that counts for something.

It’s interesting that we live in a church age that propagates the idea that we are to ‘live and let live’...not to get involved, not to ‘judge.’ Where to look the other way with sin is considered an exercise of love and of course *grace*. But here in chapter 6 of Galatians Paul is overtly telling us to do the opposite. The exercise of such **THIS** grace not make you ‘Mr. popularity’ and it may even make some folks dislike you intensely for doing so, but we are told that true grace is the “restoration” of the one caught in a trespass,, or at least give it a try. No, we do not get to “bow out” of this because to do so is not politically correct, or because they may insinuate that you are self-righteous and arrogant to tell them what to do!

Verse 1 of Galatians 6 frankly has been wholly disregarded and essentially removed from many Christians Bibles across America. This is one of those verses where we say, “well, I don’t agree with that” which everyone knows automatically negates God’s direction and renders us free from adherence to it, right?

The point of this direction showing up here, *as opposed to elsewhere in scripture*, is that such an act of correction is to operate within the context of grace. Meaning, that when someone falls into sin we don’t just kick him to the curb to teach him some sort of spiritual lesson. Our ‘grace-methodology’ is to restore him or her the best that we are able.

Certainly we need to note herein that we don't ultimately 'restore' anybody. But interacting with prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit, we are able to participate in such a restoration simply because God allows us to. Please note that the ones to take on this 'restoration' are "those that are spiritual." Indeed, this is where we usually have the problem, because we all tend to think we are spiritual. And those who really are, are usually the ones to be overcome with humility and claim they are incapable or unworthy of engaging such folks. Because of this fact, we often have the 'blind leading the blind' and the leaders taking a back seat.

This is, *by the way*, why we formed a ministerial staff and a ministry community. Such is not meant to be some sort of religious hierarchy, or to absolve others from responsibility, but rather a community where people are actually trained and tested before they engage living subjects, and then held accountable for their methods. Such an ideal is backed up in the likes of 1 Thess 5:21, 1 Jn 4:1, 2Cor 13:5, 2 Cor 2:9, Ps 26:2. Luke 12:48 says "*From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*"

We must also note that we are called to exercise this correction with a "spirit of gentleness." That doesn't always work, and sometimes a 2x4 must be used. See Gal 2:11, 2 Sam 12, Jude 1:23, 1 Cor 4:21, 2 Thess 3:15, Rom 15:14. But for sure our hearts must always approach such action with a "spirit of humility." 2Ti 2:25 "*...in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.*"

We are told that our approach to this matter needs to be done indeed with humility and grace, but also with caution! Because we can often charge into a situation with the best intentions, determined to be the 'knight in shining armor,' only to be overtly tempted ourselves by that sin to cause us to fall right along with the one who we were trying to rescue.

6:2-5

Again, Paul is emphasizing that grace is not operated in a bubble. Christ love is a verb, though we so often want to relegate it to a position only as a noun. It requires movement and action. To "bear with" in the biblical sense is more than just to 'put up with.' We often fail to realize how often God comes to us and helps us through other Christians. Those who have a "just me and Jesus" idea of the Christian life has a very narrow view of how Jesus meets our needs.

To do this, *to do any of the instruction in Galatians*, we must be in love with Jesus first and filled with the Holy Spirit. If we move in that state, love for those around us will naturally follow. 'Other-centeredness' is a fruit of the Spirit. 'Self-centeredness' is a fruit of the flesh. It is a stark marker of who and what we are.

How often today we are quick to evoke the language of a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ" and believe that the only thing that matters is me and Jesus; me *with* Jesus. But the fact is, the whole of the Bible teaches unity and community. Repeatedly we are reminded that we cannot operate as an island! The fact is, your life and my life does affect others as well as ourselves. I promise you... **alone you will fall.**

This does not however mean we are to meddle in every aspect of a person's life. That is cultic. We are not to carry each other's **lives**, but each other's **burdens**. When we intervene with assistance in situations that stem from their laziness, hard hearts, stubbornness, etc., that is not love, that is enabling. Those issues aren't "burdens" they are 'loads.' We need to tell those folks to suck it up or live with the consequences. We are to help carry our brothers and sister's burdens, not their loads.

The original language behind burden is a crushing issue that is outside of one's control and effect. Sometimes one needs to step it up and be a real man or be a godly woman and move to fix what is broken in your life. Decide what kind of life you want to live. This goes back to the first verse of this chapter!

One of the most used lines by folks who reject this teaching is that "you are unloving." That premise comes from the fact that he or she wants to live in a continual sin situation, and when we would not be "lovingly supportive" of their sin, they bite back. "*You didn't help me...you didn't carry me...you didn't love me!*" The world says we need to be supportive of all lifestyles and views. The Bible does not however say that. When we attempt to run the kingdom of God on worldly standards, we become... at least powerless, and at worst, even **blasphemous**.

When a real burden comes, we need to gather around that soul and love them with action! The world...and yes often the greater church, has so often replaced GOD love with earthly love. If you do not understand how God loves, you will try to love within the church the way the world loves, and that just doesn't work, nor are we called to do so as Christians. Often we can therefore try to love people in their sin, instead of telling them to knock it off as instructed in verse one.

You need to know that this is not a popular ministerial plan. Few are willing to hear this direction and act accordingly. I know that ours is not always an easy church to be a part of. We believe in the Bible. All of it. And there will always be those who simply will not stomach the Bible as it is written and will attempt to snack through it, treat it like a buffet line, eating what they want and rejecting the rest. We don't. We won't. Many simply want the lie over the truth, even though the lie is damning and worthless.

This fellowship will never pat you on the head and tell you that you are ok when you are not. But there are still people who actually want someone to tell them the truth in the midst of a world of lies and 'make-believe.' People who want God's plan, all of it. People who want to be part of a community where their life is shared, the good... and the smelly stuff too, and you have brothers and sisters around you to bless with your gifting and your Christ-style love.

I don't want to ever pastor a community that believes otherwise, and I am constantly reminded of how rare this is, how rare you are. I am so very blessed to be your pastor. Thank you for your love that is returned to me.

Lastly, verse 3 reminds us of an important fact: "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself."

In the history of man, we prove again and again that there is no greater sin danger than that of pride. This speaks of our tendency to lift ourselves up on a pedestal, then to go the next step of believing we don't need anybody else. Paul is warning us here about this as he does in Romans 12:3 "*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*" Paul goes on to drive home the "community/body life aspect" of all of this in that next verse in Romans, reminding us that "we have many members in one body..."

I have met a lot of spiritual "little boys" that don't think they need to be part of a fellowship, nor do they need accountability to body life. They are spiritual children, and they will remain that way until they acknowledge that such is self-deception and Anti-Christ.

This verse speaks of the flock's relationship with the under-shepherd. It speaks of those who are 'taught the word'...is that you? If so, you are to "share in all good things" with me and with the other pastors here. Even the laymen that work all week long in a secular workplace, only to give up their off time to come and serve you, come and teach you the Word. And this speaks of more than just financial support. If that is what Paul meant, he would have said just that. But he said to share in "all good things."

Of course to teach this can come off as self-serving. But the fact remains that the scripture calls upon us to bless, support, love, and back those who teach us the Word of God. The truth is that so many leaders actually endure just the opposite. I say that not in the way of complaint, but just as fact. Our leaders are most often "guilty until proven innocent" and we love direct preaching until the preaching is directed at us!

I appreciate the fact that people are actually willing to pay me to do what I used to do and would still do for free. But honestly, the intangibles that I receive in this fellowship are far more important than financial compensation. Your backing...even when it is hard. Your love, your prayers, your support, your unity with me is invaluable.

I want only to be a part of a community whose heart is "This is the place where our needs are met, where we're blessed, where we are protected, where we are growing in maturity; so we're going to share in order that the ministry can continue, financially, physically, spiritually, emotionally. Where the heart of the flock is "I am going to put myself out there" because my pastors "put themselves out there." Ultimately you have to ask... "Are you a customer here or a co-worker?"

6:7-8

Truth be told, many of us just rip this passage out of our Bible. We don't want to be reminded of this truth! We want to believe we can beat the odds and prove it's not true! We want to invest in the flesh, invest in this life over the next, sow to our pleasures while ignoring the Spirit and the kingdom, and then we wonder why God seems so distant and our practical lives in Christ are such a mess! **Hello!?** It really is a simply concept! So simple that it is hard to dance out of this one.

All that Paul has been talking about in this letter comes down to this one great truth; Just what are you planting? You cannot plant corn, sit back, and expect a harvest of strawberries! The way to battle sin and the flesh is to starve it out. When you have a bunch of mean dogs, which one survives and is the baddest of them all? Of course it is the one you feed the most! There is no profound metaphorical meaning here. It says what it means. And you can take it to the bank, ***it will happen just as this passage promises.*** It is a truth that proves itself in our marriages, our financial management, our child-rearing, our service unto God, etc. "*those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same*" (Job 4:8) and that those who "*sow the wind ... reap the whirlwind*" (Hos. 8:7)

Paul already called us to back up and hang tight with good teachers. When we sit under the teaching of false teachers like the Galatians had been doing or attend to leaders who fail to give the scripture the "teeth" it is due, we eventually 'reap the consequences.' Easy teaching is certainly more palatable and far "easier to plant." But hey, once it come to harvest we find we grew all sorts of stuff no wants to eat.

Paul is warning them not to be deceived. And you know, once someone is in that place, it's really hard to get them out. Back in chapter 3 Paul called them fools. That's where this takes us. Into the "cul-de-sac of stupidity."

The sad fact is that age here doesn't matter either. I have seen those in the latter years of their lives who have attended church nearly all of their lives get real deceived and ripped off, as well as young people who had it all

going for them and were on the path to having all God created them for, life large, and then threw it away to follow all the other hordes of sheep down the same beaten down road of emptiness and shallow thrills. The fact is, deception is easy to find. Truth takes investment.

Obadiah 1:3 grabs this fact and lays it out for us: “*The pride of your heart has deceived you...*” Sadly, we don’t even need any help getting stupid. All we have to do is get prideful, and stupid always follows.

How does this happen, how do we deceive ourselves? Often we will walk out of service after service, quick to state “Hey, that was a great service, a great Bible study,” but our life and behavior doesn't change with what was taught. We deceive ourselves into thinking that because we *know the facts* we're really growing. We're really operating. We're really cranking it out as Christians. But we have deceived ourselves, because we're not producing any fruit, **just pride**. The information in our heads never reaches the practical outlet in our hands and feet in order to live it out.

And then, if we don’t bring down ourselves, there are always the false teachers out there waiting to get you! We see the fallout of their work all the time. Matthew 24 warns us that they are out there, but few of us are as careful as we should be, because again our pride never lets us believe it could happen to us.

Some years ago an article was written concerning American author and journalist Earnest Hemingway. Hemingway was in many ways a “bigger than life” persona. The article made the statement that Hemingway had proven that you could do everything you wanted to do with no consequence. After all, he had won the Nobel Prize in literature! The article stated "the old Victorian ideas of the Bible that the wages of sin is death," and that "what you sow you shall reap" have all been proven to be a lie in the life of Hemingway. He has done this and he's done that and he's done the other thing ... the article spoke about his lack of morality and so forth and so on and heaped the praise upon him. Ten years later to the very month that the article was written he put a bullet through his brain and killed himself. (John McArthur) Then 35 years later his granddaughter Margaux Hemingway killed herself, “visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations.”

The fact remains, what you sow, you will reap. Even if you manage to avoid Hemingway’s exit, there is always death and eternity waiting. And you know, it comes so fast and it comes most assuredly.

6:9-10

We can often try to bring to the table all sorts of earthly ideas in this arena. Worldly standards on what is love, or human standards on “what I deserve” or the fleshly call for “payback.” We can tantrum and yell “I deserve...(whatever)!” What you and I deserve is death. We’re sinners. We’re bad.

But never forget. The kingdom of God is not the world, and does not run by its rules. Rarely is God’s justice or His reward a microwave situation! Nothing operates in there without patience. God is so patient and He expects us to be also! Patience is part of mature adulthood. We can kick and scream all we want about wanting that cookie right now, but Dad is holding the cookie jar.

We get one pass through this life and we are called to serve and bless everyone we can along the way. Especially those God “puts in our way.” Especially those of the “household of faith” - IE the community of believers, the church, the body you are a part of.

“In due season”...clearly growing something takes time. If you are confident you have planted right and planted the correct stuff, then nurture that crop and it will come to harvest. However, if you plant today, do not expect to be a church elder tomorrow. Growing takes patience and care.

6:11-13

Paul is now coming in for a landing and bringing this letter to a close. In doing so, he gives one final ‘shot across the bow.’ He reminds the readers that the only reason the “circumcision boys’ are going after them is that adherence to their directives make them look good and takes the heat off of them. Ultimately it wasn’t about the Galatians! It was never about them! It was always about the Judaizers, the legalists. It was all about them winning the fight and coming out on top.

And make no mistake. Those who mess with you today are of the same stripe. They don’t tell you those things because they love you. They tell you these things because they love themselves. They are compelled by their flesh, their bitterness, the pride, their self. They are watching you and seeking for a point of vulnerability.

They attack the young and immature that move away from the pack. In the pack they are safe. Alone, they get eaten. They are still picking people off because those folks sowed to their pride, thought they needed no one, failed to serve and invest in the body of Christ. They harvested loneliness, anger, and confusion, because they planted loneliness, anger, and confusion and when the harvest came they just had a whole lot more than they started with!

6:14-18

Paul wasn’t interested in making the Galatians into trophies for some twisted game of spiritual ‘road-warrior.’ He knew himself. He knew he had nothing to boast about. Few people ever know themselves that well, because few will admit that without God we *are* nothing. We *got* nothing.

For Paul, he was “dead to this world.” **Dead:** it’s a starkly emphatic picture. A word of such finality. Paul was done with it all. He wasn’t ever going to go back to trying to be a good guy and doing all the right stuff so he could look good to the next guy and gain a seat at the ‘big table.’ That was all religion. He found the grace of God, and for Him there was no turning back.

In finality, he says to those who would try to fight him on his words, ...*and there will always be those who want to fight*, he says “bring it on.” He had already been beaten, whipped, stoned, and attacked repeatedly. He had the scars to prove he was God’s man. Do you have such scars? He was throwin’ down on these guys: boys, show me *your* scars. For their ‘lilly white spiritual hands’ gave them away.

Live in His grace.

Love in His grace.

Serve in His grace.

Rejoice in His grace.

And never, never, never be moved...